

“Yogi Insignia in Mughal Painting and Avadhi Romances”¹

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James Mallinson SOAS University of London

When the theoretical principles of lived asceticism confront its practicalities, compromises are made. Indian ascetics renounce material possessions, yet they are as closely identified as any other Indian social group with the wearing of specific material insignia. The ascetic lifestyle may itself result in the development of corporeal attributes such as long matted hair or an emaciated body and it may require the acquisition of implements such as fire-tongs or a begging bowl; in addition, ascetic lineages differentiate themselves from one another by the wearing of sect-markers such as earrings or forehead markings. Artists, poets and travellers have long been fascinated with India's ascetics and, in their depictions and descriptions of them, have paid close attention to such insignia. In this essay I examine the insignia sported by ascetics of the Nath *sampradaya*, an order of yogis whose first historical members lived at the end of the first millennium CE and which

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continues to flourish today.² In so doing I shall demonstrate how, like the close reading of texts, the close reading of material sources allows them to be historicised and broad inferences to be made about their wider historical context. Furthermore, I shall demonstrate how the close reading of material sources may be used in tandem with the close reading of texts to greater effect.

It is not until the Nath *sampradaya*'s recent consolidation that we find prescriptions from the order itself concerning its members' appearance.³ The Nath's "amazing apparel",⁴ the colourful legends associated with them, their openness and their reputation as wonder-working yogis mean, however, that their appearance has been

² On the history of the Nath *sampradaya* and the use of the name Nath as a generic term for members of the order, see J. Mallinson, "The Nāth Saṃpradāya" in the *Brill Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Vol. 3, Leiden: Brill. 2011, pp. 407-428. In this essay I use "Nath" to refer to all yogis of this tradition, including those predating the term's generic use. When referring to those Nath lineages which claim Gorakhnath as the order's head, I use the more specific term "Gorakhnathi".

³ Two vernacular Nath texts in the *Gorakh bāṇī* collection (*śabdās* 48-49, *pad* 10.5 and the *Abhai mātr yog*), whose earliest manuscripts date to the 17th century, give lists of yogi insignia (which are correlated with spiritual virtues). Deshpande (1986:159-160) quotes a long list of yogi insignia from the *Navanāthnavakam*, further references to which I have been unable to find in Deshpande's book or elsewhere:

“saili-śṛṅgi-mṛgājina-dhvajapaṭṭa-kakṣapuṭitopikā
 chatraṃ pustaka-yogapaṭṭa-guṭikā ghaṇṭī paṭī pāvati [sic, perhaps wrong for pāvakī]
 ḍibbi-daṇḍa-kamaṇḍalu laghu jaṭāḥ śṛikuṇḍale diṇḍimāḥ
 śaṅkha kharpara mekhalā japavarī tumbī triśūlam kalā
 kaupīnam paraśu vibhūti rachali rudrākṣamālā gale
 kantha-kaṇikāna-pādukāḥ sājaraṇa-bhasme-tripuṇḍam śaśī
 kāṣāyāmbara kambalādi-vividho vyāghrāmbaram veṣṭanam
 śṛigorakṣaka veṣa eva yatinām adesa varaṇi mukhe”

Deshpande also cites a passage on yogi insignia from the 1819 CE *Navanāthabhaktisāra* which appears to be derivative of the *Premākhyān* descriptions. The *Śrīnātharahasya* is an encyclopedic modern manual for the Nāth yogi, covering everything from the minutiae of ritual to the position in which the yogi should sleep. The detailed descriptions of various Nāth insignia found in its 2010 edition (see pp. 467-495) have been drawn upon in this paper.

⁴ *Kanhāvat* 342.9: *bahu acakar ke bhekh*. Ed. Parameshvari Lal Gupta, Varanasi: Annapurna Prakashan, 1981.

well documented in older historical sources, both material and literary. The most detailed and best known of these are, respectively, Mughal-era miniature paintings and the early Hindi romances known as *premkathas*.

In what follows I shall examine individually each item of Nath insignia named in the *premkathas*. Many of them have been worn by Indian ascetics of all traditions and I shall situate each item within a broader history of Indian asceticism by identifying the earliest evidence for its use and, where useful in the context of the paper, tracing its subsequent history. I shall also correlate the insignia listed in the *premkathas*⁵ with those depicted in Mughal-era paintings (as well as earlier material sources) in order to draw conclusions about the composition of those texts and the naturalism (to borrow from art history a term which denotes the accuracy of a depiction) of their descriptions. Finally, I shall use the history of the various individual insignia and their representations as the basis for conclusions about the history of the Nath *sampradaya* as a whole.

Material sources: carvings and paintings

In addition to Mughal-era paintings of Nath yogis, whose naturalism I have argued for elsewhere (2013), I shall draw here on earlier material depictions, some of which have not previously been used in scholarship on the order. In March 2016 Dr Daniela

⁵ Several other pre-modern north Indian vernacular texts give descriptions of Nath yogis, but none is as detailed as those found in the *premkathas* (which, in addition to the passages analysed here include several other mentions of yogi insignia which have not been drawn upon in this article). See James Mallinson, “Yogic Identities: Tradition and Transformation”, Smithsonian Institution Research Online, 2013 <http://www.asia.si.edu/research/articles/yogic-identities> (especially notes 29 and 55) for references, to which may be added those discussed in Monika Horstmann, “The Emergence of the Nāthyogī Order in the Light of Vernacular Sources”. International Journal of Tantric Studies Vol.10 No.1. <http://asiatica.org/ijts/10-1/emergence-nathyogi-order-light-vernacular-sources/#n1up>, 2014.

Verses 27-28 of the early 15th-century Telugu *Navanāthacaritramu* of Gauraṇa give a detailed description of Matsyendranātha. His accoutrements are described as follows (translation in Jamal Jones, *A Poetics of Power in Andhra*, PhD Dissertation submitted to the University of Chicago, 2018, pp.200-201, 1323-1450 CE): “on the forehead a shining triple smear of holy ash; a glimmering ivory staff; a sparkling red guriya mala; delicate, tawny dreadlocks; a horn; a fine silken mat; a shimmering and lovely jeweled rosary”.

Bevilacqua and I visited a number of sites in western India where such depictions are found. First was the Kadri-Manjunath complex in Mangalore, where statues of Nath siddhas, including possibly the oldest known depiction of Matsyendra, may be seen.⁶ Next, Vijayanagar, where there are more than a hundred reliefs of Nath yogis on temple columns dated to the early 16th-century.⁷ We then visited Panhale Kaji on the Konkan coast of Maharashtra, where reliefs and statuary in a series of caves discovered in the early 1970s include a set of twelve yogis, depictions of Matsyendra overhearing Shiva teaching the Kaula doctrine to Parvati, and reliefs of the 84 siddhas (the earliest known Indian depiction of this grouping). The Nath reliefs at these caves date from the 13th-14th centuries CE.⁸ Finally we inspected the reliefs of twelve Nath siddhas on the northern (“Mahudi”) gate at Dabhoi in Gujarat, which were created c.~1230 and have been described by Sastri (1940) and U.P. Shah (1957),

⁶ This statue is now in the Government Museum in Mangalore. A photograph of it has been published in P.G. Bhatt, *Studies in Tuluva History and Culture*, Manipal: P.G.Bhatt, 1975 (Plate 302(b)). Bhatt (*ibid.*:292) writes that it is “undoubtedly an early sculpture” and in the caption to its photograph dates it to the tenth century, as does the statue’s museum caption card. The grounds for this dating are not made clear; I suspect that it is some centuries younger and that the date has been put back to make it older than the earliest evidence for Buddhism at Kadri, a statue of Lokeśvara dated 1068 CE in the inscription on its pedestal. On the Kadri-Manjunath complex, see Véronique Bouillier, *Itinérance et vie monastique. Les ascètes Nāth Yogīs en Inde contemporaine*, Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme, 2007: ch.4, and “The Pilgrimage to Kadri Monastery (Mangalore, Karnataka): A Nāth Yogī Performance,” in H. Pauwels (ed.), *Patronage and Popularisation, Pilgrimage and Procession. Channels of Transcultural Translation and Transmission in Early Modern South Asia. Papers in Honour of Monika Horstmann*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009, pp. 135-146.

⁷ For sketches of Vijayanagar depictions of Nath yogis, see A.M. Dallapiccola & A. Verghese, *Sculpture at Vijayanagara: Iconography and Style*, New Delhi: Manohar/American Institute of Indian Studies, 1998, pp. 243-252. I am grateful to Seth Powell, Zac Pelleriti and Helmut Buescher for their help in finding depictions of yogis at Vijayanagar. Similar images are found on the *prakara* wall of the Mallikarjuna temple at Srisailam, which was completed in 1510 CE (many of which are reproduced in Rob Linrothe, “Siddhas and Sṛīśailam, “Where All Wise People Go,”” in *Holy Madness: Portraits of Tantric Siddhas*, ed. Rob Linrothe, New York: Rubin Museum of Art; Chicago: Serindia Publications, 2006, pp. 125-143).

⁸ See M.N. Deshpande, *The Caves of Panhāle-Kāji (Ancient Pranālaka)*, New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1986, pp. 124, 126.

and mentioned in passing by Deshpande (1986), but otherwise not drawn upon in scholarship on yogis (ill.1-4).⁹

IMAGE 2.1



2.1 Matsyendra on the Mahudi Gate, Dabhoi, photograph by James Mallinson 2016.

IMAGE 2.2



⁹ The twelve siddhas include Matsyendra, Chaurangi and Goraksha, who may be identified by their accompanying fish, hands and cows respectively. A full treatment of the carvings on Dabhoi's northern gate, an important source for the history of yoga and yogis, must await a separate essay. The siddha images are all in poor condition: they are within easy reach and appear to have been deliberately damaged. But the more detailed deity images in the two registers above them (the lower is perhaps of eight *yoginis*, the higher of eight Bhairavas with consorts) are well preserved, albeit covered in bird excrement and other detritus. Their height, and the fact that the gate remains a busy thoroughfare, made it difficult to get good photographs. U.P. Shah appears not to have visited the site but to have worked from photographs of only the twelve siddhas. He does not describe the deities, nor does he report the various depictions of ascetics in non-seated *asanas* at the very top of some of the brackets. These non-seated *asana* depictions are almost 300 years older than any others known to me (the next oldest are those at Srisailam, Hampi and Sringeri).

2.2 Goraksha on the Mahudi Gate,
Dabhoi, photograph by James

Mallinson 2016.

IMAGE 2.3



2.3 Kanthadi? (identification unsure)
on the Mahudi Gate, Dabhoi,
photograph by James Mallinson 2016.

IMAGE 2.4



2.4 Adinatha on the Mahudi Gate,
Dabhoi, photograph by James
Mallinson 2016.

IMAGE 2.5



2.5 Sant Svarup Das, Haridwar Kumbh Mela, 2010, photograph by James Mallinson.

Literary sources: the *premkathas*

In the Avadhi romances known as the *premkathas* or *premakhyans* we often find the trope of the lovelorn protagonist donning the guise of an ascetic follower of the yogi Gorakhnath and setting out on a quest for his beloved, a quest which is simultaneously an allegory of the Sufi interior journey. The descriptions of the hero's yogi guise in the *Mirigāvatī* of Shaikh Qutban Suhravardi (1503 CE), the *Madhumālatī* of Manjhan (1545 CE) and the *Padmāvat* of Malik Muhammad Jayasi (1540 CE)¹⁰ have been drawn on by me and other scholars, but until recently I had

¹⁰ Jayasi's *Kanhāvat* (342.9) also mentions yogis, but does not describe them in detail. On this passage, see Heidi Pauwels, "Whose Satire? Gorakhnāth confronts Krishna in *Kanhāvat*", pp. 35-64 in *Indian Satire in the Period of First Modernity*, eds. Monika Horstmann and Heidi Rika Maria Pauwels, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2012, pp. 35-64.

overlooked that in their 1379 CE predecessor, the *Cāndāyan* of Daud,¹¹ which to my knowledge has not been referred to in scholarship on the Naths.

These textual descriptions, together with my translations of them, follow.

Cāndāyan:¹²

sabana phaṭika mundrā sira seli | kaṇṭha jāpa rudarākhaiṃ meli |
cakaru jogauṭā kothī kanthā | pāiṃ pābarī gorakha panthā |
mukha vibhūti kara gahī adhārī | chālā baisi kai āsana mārī |
ḍaṇḍā khappara sīṅgī pūrai | neṃha cāraca gāvai jhūrai |
guna kiṅgirī tehiṃ bār bajāvai | citahi cāndā mukha citra upāvai |
siddha purukha maḍha baiṭheu dhari tirasūra duvāri |
bhuguti mori banakhaṇḍ kai cānda nāma tata sāra || 164

“With crystal earrings (*mundrā*) in his ears, a thread (*seli*) on his head, a *rudrākṣa* rosary (*jāpa*) around his neck, a discus (*cakaru*), a yoga-belt (*jogauṭā*), a bag (*kothī*), a patchwork cloth (*kanthā*), wooden sandals on his feet (*pābarī*), [he became] a follower of Gorakh. With ash (*vibhūti*) on his face [and] a meditation crutch (*adhārī*) held in his hand, he made his seat by sitting on a hide (*chālā*). [Carrying] a staff (*ḍaṇḍā*) [and] a bowl (*khappara*), he blows a horn (*sīṅgī*); singing lovesongs he torments himself. Then he plays the ascetic's viol (*kiṅgirī*) and conjures up an image of Cāndā's face in his mind.

The perfected man put his trident (*tirasūra*) at the door of his hut and sat down, [saying] “My food is from the forest; Cāndā's name is the essence of reality.”

¹¹ I am grateful to Saarthak Singh for bringing the *Cāndāyan* passage to my attention.

¹² *Cāndāyan: Dāūd-viracit pratham Hindī sūfī prem-kāvya*, ed. Mataprasad Gupta, Agra: Pramanik Prakashan, 1967, p. 160.

kasi uḍiānī gōrakhapanthā | pāṁṁ pāṁvarī mēkhali kaṁthā |
jaṭā cakara mundra japamālā | daṇḍā khappara kēsari chālā |
jōgauṭā rudrākha adhārī | bhasama lieu tirasūla saṁvārī |
sīṅgī pūrai pantha saṁbhārā | japai suraṅgana ihai adhārā |
kara kiṅgarī dhandhārī mana mēlā | tāra bajāvai raini akēlā |
jōgajuguta hoi khēleu māraga siddha hōi kahaṁ jāi |
bhuguti mōri miragāvatī jīvana bhikhi dēi kō rāi || 106.

Pulling tight his tiger-skin sash,¹⁴ the follower of Gorakh donned wooden sandals (pāṁvarī) on his feet, a girdle (mekhali) [and] a cloak (kanthā). He had matted locks (jaṭā), a bladed hoop (cakara), earrings (mundra), a rosary (japa-mālā), a staff (daṇḍā), a bowl (khappara), a tiger skin (kesari-chālā), a meditation belt (jogauṭā), rudraksha seeds, a meditation crutch (adhārī) [and] ashes (bhasama) [and] was adorned by a trident (tirasūla). He blew the horn whistle (sīṅgī) and went on the path, reciting that divinely beautiful one's name as his support. He took the ascetic's viol (kiṅgarī) in

¹³ *Miragāvatī* of Kutubana: Avadhī text with critical notes, ed. D.F. Plukker, Thesis Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1981, p. 24. I have drawn on Aditya Behl's translation of this passage, in particular in the final line, and further comments and interpretation by Lubomir Ondračka, in particular in the penultimate line.

¹⁴ *Uḍyāna bandhana* or *bandha* (with variant spellings of *uḍyāna* including *uḍḍiyāna* and *oḍyāna*) commonly refers to a haṭhayogic practice in which the the abdomen is drawn inwards and upwards while the breath is held. The *Aṣṭāṅgayoganirūpaṇa* of the *Pampāmāhātmya* teaches this practice but adds that it has two varieties, one of which is performed using a tiger skin; it is likely to be this which is being referred to in the *Mirigāvatī*. The spy Parran, disguised as a yogi, is depicted wearing such an item in an illustration to a manuscript of the *Hamzanāmā* reproduced in D. Diamond, *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, p.208. The *Abhai mātrā jog* includes *uḍayāṁṇī* in a list of yogi insignia. The name of the *uḍḍiyāna bandha* is likely to have been taken from Uddiyana, a region to the northwest of modern-day Peshawar (see A. Sanderson, "The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir", in *Mélanges Tantriques à la mémoire d'Hélène Brunner*, ed. by D. Goodall and A. Padoux, Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2007, pp. 231-442; cf. the yogic *jālandhara bandha*). In some *haṭhayoga* texts *uḍḍiyāna* is explained as deriving from the verbal root *uḍ*, "to fly" (*Gorakṣaśataka* 58).

his hand, fixed his mind to the puzzle; and played the strings [of both] alone at night.

Having become engaged in yoga, he took to wandering in order to become an adept (*siddha*). He called out loud, “My food is Mirigavati, give me alms that I may live, oh lord!”

*Madhumālatī*¹⁵:

*māṃtā pitaiṃ roi jeta kahā | kuṃvar kāna so eka na rahā |
pema paṃtha jeiṃ sudhi budhi khoī | duhuṃ jaga kichu samujhahi nahiṃ soī |
kaṭhina biraha dukha gā na saṃbhārī | māṃgeu khappara daṇḍa adhārī |
cakra māṃtha mukha bhasama caḍhāvā | savana phaṭika muṃdrā pahirāvā |
udapānī kasi kai kara sāmṭī | guna kiṃgarī bairāgī ṭhāṭī |
kaṃthā mekhali cirakuṭā jaṭā parī sira kesa |
bajra kachauṭā bāṃdhi kai kiya gorakha kā besa || 172*

*dukha udāsa bairāga merāvā | inha tīniu tirasūla gaḍhāvā |
au rudrācha kerī japa mārī | au siṃgī giyaṃ alpa adhārī |
baisākhī gorakha dhaṃdhārī¹⁶ | dhyāna dharana mana pauna saṃkorī |
pema pāvarī rākheu pāū | mriga chālā bairāga saṃhāū |
darasana lāgi bhesa saba gherā | jāṃcai dukha madhumālati kerā |
gyāna dhyāna au āsana savana nainanha lau lāgi |
darasana lāgi bhesa sabha kīnhā maku gorakha jā jāgi || 173*

However many cries his mother and father uttered, not one was heeded by the prince. He who loses his wits on the path of love perceives nothing in the two worlds.¹⁷ He could not bear the harsh pain of separation and called for a bowl (*khappara*), a staff (*daṇḍa*) [and] a meditation-crutch (*adhārī*). He put a fillet (*cakra*)

¹⁵ *Madhumālatī* of Manjhan, ed. Mataprasad Gupta, Allahabad: Mitra Prakashan, 1961, pp.144-146.

¹⁶ The edition has *dhaṃdhorī* but I have adopted *dhaṃdhārī* as found in the other *premkathas* and in one of the manuscripts used by Gupta in his edition of the *Madhumālatī*.

¹⁷ i.e. this world and the next.

on his head [and] ash (*bhasama*) on his face. He wore crystal earrings (*muṇḍrā*) in his ears, he grasped tightly a water pot (*udapānī*) [and] he strung an ascetic's viol (*kiṅgarī*).

He wore a cloak (*kaṁthā*), a girdle (*mekhali*) [and] a ragged cloth (*cirakuṭā*). His hair turned into matted locks (*jaṭā*) on his head [and] he tied a vajra loincloth.¹⁸ [Thus] he took on the insignia (*besa*) of Gorakh.

He joined sorrow, detachment and asceticism together [and] made a trident (*tirasūla*) out of them. He [took up] a *rudrākṣa* rosary, [wore] a horn (*siṅgī*) around his neck [and carried] a small meditation-crutch (*adhārī*). He [carried] a crook (*baisākhī*) [and] a Gorakh puzzle (*dhaṁdhārī*). He focussed his mind and breath for meditation and fixation (*dharana*)¹⁹. He placed his feet in the wooden sandals (*pāvarī*) of love, [and donning] a deerskin (*mriga chālā*), he prepared himself for asceticism. He put on all [these] insignia and sought out sorrow in order to behold Madhumālātī. His knowledge, meditation, posture, ears [and] eyes [were all engaged] for the sake of dissolution [in her]. He adopted all these insignia for the sake of beholding her [and] it was as if Gorakh [himself] had awoken.

*Padmāvat jogī khaṇḍa*²⁰

tajā rāja rājā bhā jogī | au kiṅgarī kara gahem biyogī |
tana bisaṁbhara mana bāura raṭā | arujhā pema parī sira jaṭā |
canda badana au candana dehā | bhasama caṛhāi kīnha tana khehā |
mekhala sigī cakra dhaṁdhārī | jogauṭā rudrākha adhārī |
kanthā pahiri ḍaṇḍa kara gahā | siddhi hoi kahaṁ gorakha kahā |
muṇḍrā sravana kaṇṭha japamālā | kara udapāna kāmḍha baghachālā |
pāmvari pāmva līnha sira chātā | khappara līnha bhesa kai rātā |

¹⁸ The meaning of vajra here is unclear to me. It may refer to the loincloth being tied very tight as a sign of chastity. The word vajra is used in the Nath loincloth mantra given in the *Śrī nāth rahasya* (p.487) but its meaning here is also unclear to me.

¹⁹ i.e. Sanskrit *dhāraṇā*, a common auxiliary (*aṅga*) of yoga practice.

²⁰ *Padmāvat, mālik Muhammad jāyāsī kṛt mahākāvya*, ed. V.S. Agrawal, Chirgaon: Sahitya Sadan, 1998 ed., pp. 121-2.

calā bhuguti māṅgai kahaṁ sāji kayā tapa joga /
siddha houṁ padumāvati pāem hiradai jehi ka biyoga ||126

The king gave up his kingdom and became a yogi. A renouncer (*viyogī*), he took an ascetic's viol in his hand. His body was pained, his mind crazed and shouting. He was twisted up by love; matted locks (*jaṭā*) [twisted up] on his head. His face was like the moon and his body like sandal, but he put on ash (*bhasma*) and made himself dusty. [He wore] a girdle (*mekhala*) [and] a horn (*siṅgī*), [and carried] a discus (*cakra*), a puzzle (*dhaṁdhārī*), a yoga-belt (*jogaṭa*), *rudraksha* seeds [and] a meditation crutch (*adhārī*). He put on a cloak (*kanthā*) and took up a staff (*daṇḍa*). In order to become an adept (*siddha*), he said, "Gorakh". [He wore] earrings (*mundrā*) in his ears [and] a rosary (*japamālā*) around his neck. In his hand was a water-pot (*udapāna*) and on his shoulder a tigerskin (*baghachālā*). He put wooden sandals (*pāṁvari*) on his feet and a parasol (*chātā*) over his head. He took up a bowl (*khappar*) and red clothes (*bhesa kai rātā*).

Having readied his body for asceticism and yoga, he went to achieve his aim.

"May I become an adept (*siddha*) by finding Padmavati, from whom my heart is separated!"

These descriptions are so similar that in the absence of any other known source we must assume that those of the *Miragāvatī*, *Madhumālātī* and *Padmāvat* are derived from that of the *Cāṇḍāyan*. Thirteen of the insignia are common to all three lists:

1. ash (*vibhūti* / *bhasma*)
2. rosary (*japa-mālā*)
3. staff / crutch (*daṇḍā* / *baisākhī*)
4. skin / tiger-skin (*chālā* / *kesari-chālā* / *baghachālā*)
5. bowl (*khappara*)
6. earrings (*mundrā*)
7. meditation crutch (*adhārī*)
8. horn (*siṅgī*)
9. patchwork cloth/cloak (*kanthā*, *cirakuṭā*)
10. discus (*cakra*)
11. wooden sandals (*pāṁvari*)
12. ascetic's viol (*kiṅgarī*)

13. *rudrākṣa* seeds.

Additional insignia are found as follows:

14. bag (<i>kothī</i>)	<i>Cāndāyan</i>			
15. thread (<i>selī</i>)	<i>Cāndāyan</i>			
16. yoga-belt (<i>jogauṭā</i>)	<i>Cāndāyan</i>	<i>Miragāvatī</i>		<i>Padmāvat</i>
17. trident (<i>triśūla</i>)	<i>Cāndāyan</i>	<i>Miragāvatī</i>	MM	
18. girdle (<i>mekhali/mekhala</i>)		<i>Miragāvatī</i>	MM	<i>Padmāvat</i>
19. matted locks (<i>jaṭā</i>)		<i>Miragāvatī</i>	MM	<i>Padmāvat</i>
20. puzzle (<i>dhandhārī</i>)		<i>Miragāvatī</i>	MM	<i>Padmāvat</i>
21. tiger-skin sash (<i>uḍiānī</i>)		<i>Miragāvatī</i>		
22. water-pot (<i>udapāna</i>)			MM	<i>Padmāvat</i>
23. loincloth (<i>kachauṭā</i>)			MM	
24. parasol (<i>chātā</i>)				<i>Padmāvat</i>
25. red clothes (<i>bhesa kai rātā</i>)				<i>Padmāvat</i>

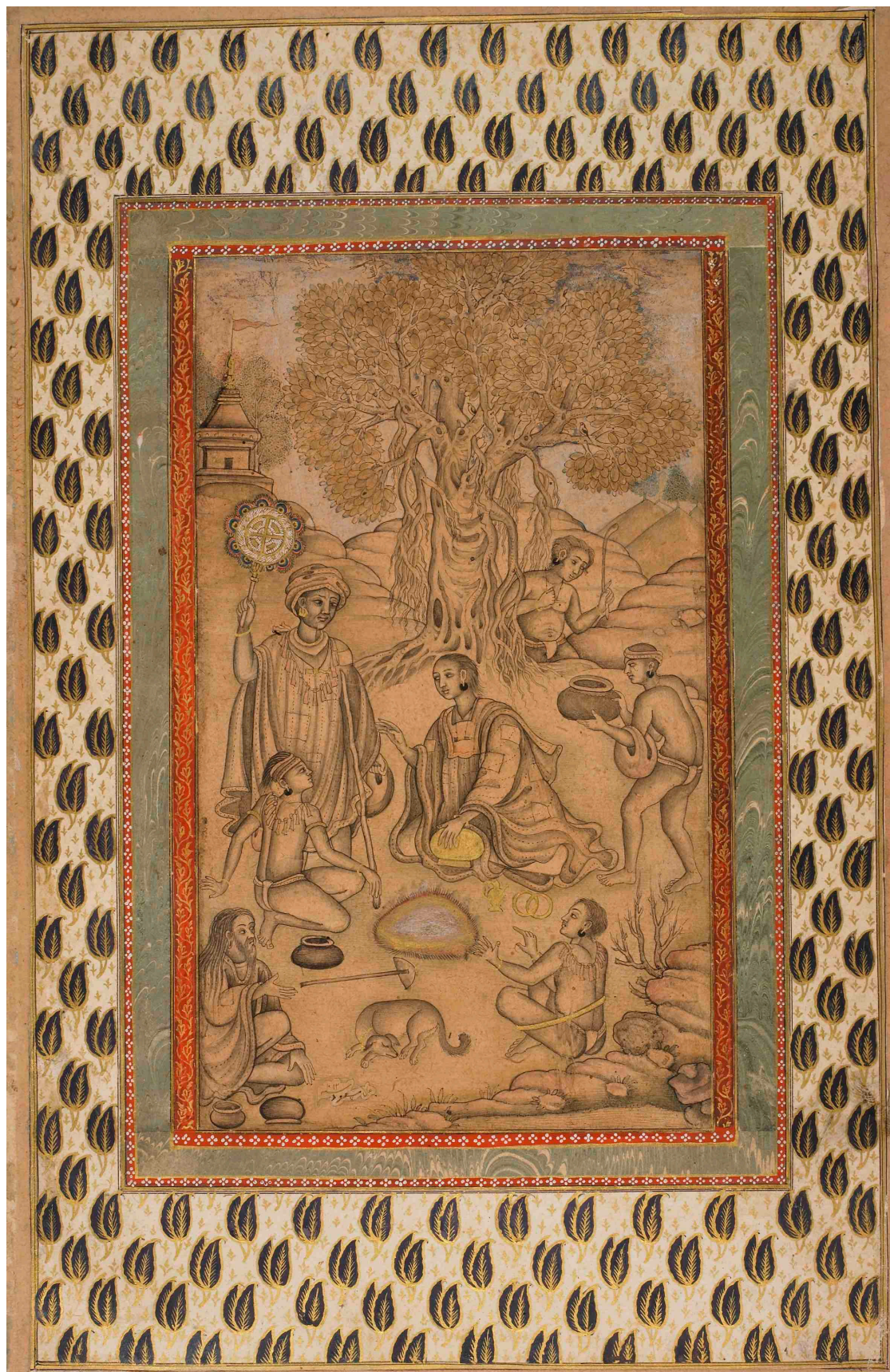
Many of these insignia (i.e. 1-7, 11, 14, 16, 18, 19, 22, 23, 25) are attributes common to ascetics of a wide range of different traditions. Thus Figures 6, 7 and 8 show them all.

Image 2.6



2.6 Folio from *Bāburnāma* ms. Victoria and Albert Museum IM 262-1913.

Image 2.7



2.7 British Library J.22,15.

Image 2.8



2.8 From the collection of Ludwig Habighorst.

Some of these insignia have been emblematic of Indian ascetics since at least the early centuries of the common era. The Jain *Bhagavatī* and *Aupapāṭika sūtras* mention various insignia of Brahmanical renunciators,²¹ including a staff,²² water-pot,²³ bowl,²⁴

²¹ Ernst Leumann, “Rosaries mentioned in Indian Literature”, *Transactions of the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists, London*, Volume 2, (1893):887–88. For a survey of prescriptions concerning ascetic insignia in the *Dharmaśāstras*, see ch. 3 of the *Yatidharmasamuccaya*, ed. and tr. Patrick Olivelle as *Rules and Regulations of Brahmanical Asceticism, Yatidharmasamuccaya of Yādava Prakāśa*, Albany: State University of New York Press. 1995.

²² The *daṇḍā* or staff is rarely found in Mughal depictions of ascetics of any order. Those that are seen are usually curved at one end so that they can be leant upon (as shown in Image 9); this type of staff is perhaps denoted more specifically by the term *baisākhī*, “crutch”, found in the *Madhumālātī*. Representations of Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath from Kadri, Panhale Kaji and Vijayanagar show them carrying club-like staffs similar to those seen in earlier depictions of Shiva as the Pashupata teacher Lakulisha (whose name may derive from *laguḍa*, “a club”). Similar but thinner staffs accompany two of the Dabhoi siddhas. These clubs or staffs match the description of the *soṃṭā*, or rod, which Sudhakar Dvivedi in his commentary on the *Padmāvat* (*Sudhākaracandrikā*, Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1911, p. 241) says is the referent of *daṇḍā* and which “yogis keep for performing magic; it is like a black ‘ruler’ (*rūlar*), a long, straight, round, wooden stick for marking straight lines. Some yogis call this the rod (*soṃṭā*) of Bhairav Nath, others that of Gorakh Nath.” In some Vijayanagar depictions of Naths, such a stick is used as a prop while balancing in complex yoga postures.

²³ The water-pot is called *udapāna* in the *Padmāvat*, but is usually known in Sanskrit as an *udapātra*, *kuṇḍa*, *kuṇḍikā* or *kamaṇḍalu*.

²⁴ The bowl is called a *karotikā* in the *Bhagavatīsūtra*. The Gorakhnathi bowl, which is used for begging as well as eating and drinking, is called a *khappara*. Like those depicted in Mughal-era painting, today’s Gorakhnathis use half a coco de mer shell for their *khappars*. The bowls floating in water in larger bowls seen in some such pictures are water-clocks (I am grateful to Dr Kazuyo Sakaki for this observation). Their use is uncertain: could it be for timing breath-retentions?

rosary, sandals²⁵ and red clothes.²⁶ A loincloth (*kaupīna* or *guhyācchāda* in Sanskrit) is mentioned in various lists of ascetic accoutrements in the *Dharmaśāstras*.²⁷ The wearing of ash by ascetics is first taught in the circa 2nd-century CE *Pāśupatasūtra*, whose second verse prescribes bathing in ashes at the three daily junctures.²⁸ The use of the skin of an antelope (*ajina*) or tiger (*vyāghracarman*) as a covering for a seat for meditation is prescribed in the *Mahābhārata* (e.g. *Bhagavadgītā* 6.11 and *Śānti parvan* 40.13).²⁹ Earrings (*mundrā*) have been worn by ascetics of various traditions

²⁵ *Pāñvarī* (known today in Hindi as *pādukā*, *kharāūṃ* or *latarī*) are wooden sandals which remain ritually pure and may be worn where other footwear may not. They are very rarely worn by Gorakhnāthīs in Mughal-era paintings, but the *Śrī Nāth Rahasya* does include *caran pādukā* among the accoutrements of the yogi (p. 215) and they were worn by the *mahant* of the Nāth *maṭh* at Dhinodhar in Kacch in the early twentieth century (Briggs 1936:20). *Pāñvarī* (or *pāñvarā*) is used by ascetics in India today to refer to wooden shovels used for smoothing over ash in their ritual fires, but this meaning for the word when used in the *premkathas* is precluded because they are always said to be worn on the feet.

²⁶ The Hindi word for the ochre-coloured cloth worn by ascetics is *geruā* (from Sanskrit *gairika*). M.B. Emeneau (“Barkcloth in India—Sanskrit *Valkala*”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 82(2), 1962:169) notes how von Luschan suggested that this colour may imitate that of bark (*valkala*), which ascetics are said to wear in a very wide variety of texts from the epics to the Puranas but which is not mentioned in the *premkathas* nor seen in Mughal-era depictions of ascetics nor worn by ascetics today. The wearing of ochre-coloured (*kaṣāya*) cloth by ascetics is mentioned frequently in texts from the epics and *Dharmaśāstras* onwards.

²⁷ See *Yatidharmasamuccaya* ch.3 for references.

²⁸ The third verse of the *Pāśupatasūtra* is an injunction to lie in ashes, and *Mahābhārata Śāntiparvan* 185.1 includes ashes in a list of places where an ascetic might sleep. The wearing of ashes is not mentioned in the Pali canon, even as a practice of non-Buddhist ascetics, although some later commentaries say that the *assapuma* or shoulder-bag was for carrying ashes (Rhys Davids & Stede 1921-25: s.v. *assa*). Nor are ashes mentioned in Brahmanical injunctions concerning ascetic practice found in the *Dharmaśāstras*. Prior to the adoption of the wearing of ashes, ascetics were sometimes said to smear themselves with mud or dirt (e.g. *Mahābhārata Śāntiparvan* 161.15).

²⁹ The wearing of an *ajina* as an upper garment is prescribed for Brahmins in the *Bhāradvājagṛhyasūtra* (1.5-6) and some *dharmaśāstra* texts (e.g. *Āpastambadharmasūtra* 1.1.3).

since at least the eighth century CE.³⁰ Shoulder-bags carried by ascetics are mentioned in the Pali canon.³¹ Ascetics often wear *jaṭā* (matted locks) in the *Mahābhārata* and Pali canon. These insignia are found in depictions of Indian ascetics of all eras and are worn or carried by Indian ascetics today.

The *Bhagavatisūtra* mentions the *chātā* or parasol among Brahmanical ascetic insignia, but it is rarely found in material depictions of yogis and is not used by them today.

The yoga-belt (*jogaṭa/yogapaṭṭa*), despite being very common in historical depictions of ascetics, is no longer used.³² The earliest depictions of *yogapaṭṭas* date to the last centuries BCE.³³ The *yogapaṭṭa* is not mentioned in the Sanskrit epics or early *dharmaśāstra* literature. Its earliest solid textual attestations are in the tantric corpus, in which its use (for “the *yogapaṭṭa* posture”, *yogapaṭṭāsana*) is taught in the earliest known Shaiva tantra, the c. 6th-century *Niśvāsattvasaṃhitā* (*Nayasūtra* 4.16, 4.105) and many subsequent texts from all tantric traditions. Commentaries on the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* from the earliest known, the *Vivaraṇa* attributed to Śaṅkara, explain the *sopāśraya āsana* taught in 2.46 as involving the use of a *yogapaṭṭa*. In medieval orthodox Brahmanical treatises investiture with a *yogapaṭṭa* is part of the initiation ritual of an ascetic (*Yatidharmaprakāśa* verse 66). Although yogis today no longer use a *yogapaṭṭa* as a support, some do still make their own decorated belts, which are worn around the waist and have hidden pockets which are used to store

³⁰ See Mallinson (2013), especially note 54. Pace Horstmann (2014, on which see below, p.?), there is no evidence prior to the late eighteenth century of Gorakhnathis wearing earrings through the cartilages of their ears, despite this now being their main identifying feature.

³¹ Rhys Davids & Stede 1921-25: s.v. *assa*.

³² S. Dvivedi (1911, p. 239) understands *jogaṭā* in the *Padmāvat* to be from either “*yogoṭā* = *yog ko oṭnevālā* = *yog ko śuddh karne vālā*”, i.e. that which purifies yoga, with *oṭā* being related to *oṭanī*, which in the northwest and Avadh means a device used to clean cotton, or “*yog ka oṭā* = *yog kā ādhār*”, from *oṭā*, the name used in the Avadh region for a support used by women to sit upon when feeding their children. *Yogapaṭṭas* are still used by yogis in Tibet (personal communication Yeshe Palmo 26th February 2015).

³³ These are on the northern gate at Sanchi and in Mathurā. On the latter see Sonya Rhie Quintanilla, *History of Early Stone Sculpture at Mathura*, Leiden: Brill, 2007, fig. 55. I thank Lubomir Ondračka for the latter reference.

various items of yogic paraphernalia. These belts are very similar to those depicted on the siddhas at Dabhoi, who either use them to support one or both bent legs or have them slung over one shoulder and across the chest (see Ill. 2.3 above).

Mughal-era paintings and reliefs at Hampi, Sringeri and Srisailam show that the meditation crutch (*adhārī*) was used by a wide range of ascetics from the 16th-century onwards, but it is not, to my knowledge, mentioned in texts prior to the *Cāndāyan*.³⁴ Its use is rare today, but not unknown (Ill. 2.5). Sudhakar Dvivedi (1911, p. 240) says that, like a bicycle, it takes some skill to sit upon. In Mughal-era paintings yogis use *adhārīs* simply to lean upon, under either their folded arms or an armpit, but reliefs at Vijayanagara and Srisailam do depict ascetics balancing on top of short sticks; perhaps it is this to which Dvivedi is referring, but he may be confusing them with the staff or *daṇḍā* carried by some yogis.³⁵

The *mekhala*, or girdle, has long been an important item of apparel for deities and twice-born householders, as recorded widely in texts and material artefacts from the c. 1000 BCE *Atharvaveda* (e.g. 6.133.1) onwards. In material depictions deities often wear ornate girdles, but they are only occasionally worn by ascetics, and very rarely by Nathas (Ill. 2.4). S. Dvivedi (1911:239) identifies the *mekhala* mentioned in the *Padmāvat* with the Brahmanical item, saying it means a rope of *muñja* grass worn around the waist such as that worn by young brahmins from the time of their investiture with the sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*). The *mekhala* is not part of the apparel of orthodox Brahmanical ascetics, however, and in the context of Gorakhnathi ascetics the word may refer to the simple belt (called an *aḍbandh* in modern Hindi) from which a loincloth is suspended. Thus H. Dvivedi identifies the Nath *mekhala* as a black wool *aḍbandh*.³⁶ To this day some Nathas wear *aḍbandhs* of two

³⁴ Shah (1957, pp. 187-8) says that an *adhārī* is visible on the right side of the tenth siddha in the Dabhoi depictions, whom he identifies as Kanthadinatha. I was unable to make out an *adhārī* with any confidence when I visited the site. Śaṅkara's commentary on *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 2.46 identifies the "support" in the "posture with a support" (*sopāśraya āsana*) as either a *yogapaṭṭa* or "a support such as a *stambha*", which may correspond to an *adhārī*. I thank Lubomir Ondračka for drawing my attention to this reference.

³⁵ See Linrothe (2006, p. 137) for depictions from Srisailam and note 23 (of this article) on the yogi's staff or *daṇḍā*.

³⁶ Hazariprasad Dvivedi, *Nāth sampradāy*, Allahabad: Lokbharati Prakashan, 1996 [1966], p. 17.

thin ropes of black wool, which they weave themselves.³⁷ Similar *aḍbandhs* may be seen on siddhas in the Dabhoi reliefs (Ill.2.3) and Mughal-era paintings of yogis (Ill. 2.6).

Specific Gorakhnathi insignia

I shall now turn to those attributes listed in the *Miragāvatī* which, in contrast to the generic ascetic insignia I have just drawn attention to, are specific Gorakhnathi sect-markers. These are the *śiṅgī* or horn, *selī* or thread, *kanthā* or cloak, and *dhandhārī* or puzzle.

The *śiṅgī*, a small horn worn on a thread around the neck, is the *sine qua non* of a Nath yogi. The earliest textual reference to the wearing of the *śiṅgī* or horn by yogis is in a description by Ibn Battuta recorded in 1361.³⁸ An early statue of Matsyendranath in the Government Museum, Mangalore, said to be from the Kadri *matha*, shows him wearing an antelope-horn *śiṅgī* of the type found in Mughal-era painted depictions of yogis.³⁹ Traces of what might have been *śiṅgīs* are evident on the chests of several of the Dabhoi siddhas (c.1220-1230),⁴⁰ and there are Tibetan depictions of siddhas wearing them from the 13th century.⁴¹

³⁷ These must be removed before bathing as they take a very long time to dry; as a result most Nathas wear only cotton *aḍbandhs*. Some Nathas, as part of the outfit worn for their begging rounds, wrap around their torsos several rounds of a long black woollen thread called a *hāl mataṅgā* (G. W. Briggs, *Gorakhnath and the Kanphata Yogis*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973 [1938], pp. 11-12) or *bhairav mataṅgā* (*Śrī nāth rahasya*, p. 214).

³⁸ *The Rehla of Ibn Battūta* (tr. Mabdi Husain, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1953), p. 166.

³⁹ On this statue, see note 7. Later statues of Matsyendra from the Kadri *matha* are very similar to that in the Mangalore museum, but, in a transition paralleled in Mughal paintings of Nath yogis, his antelope-horn *śiṅgī* changes to the small whistle now worn by Nathas (on this change see Mallinson 2013).

⁴⁰ Shah (1957:185) notes that several of the Dabhoi siddhas appear to have had something on their chests which is now unclear, but he does not suggest that they might have been *śiṅgīs*, subsequently (p.190) saying that *śiṅgīs* were not part of Nath insignia at the time of the carving of the images.

⁴¹ Christian Luczanits, “The Eight Great Siddhas in Early Tibetan Painting from c. 1200 to c. 1350”, in Linrothe (2006), p. 78.

The inclusion of *selī* in the *Cāndāyan*'s list of yogi insignia but not in later *premkathas* is surprising, since *selī* is the name of a key item of apparel for today's Naths, a long thread worn around the neck from which is suspended a *siṅgī*, a *rudrākṣa* seed and a ring called a *pāvitri* (Mallinson 2013). In the *Cāndāyan*, however, the *selī* is worn on the head and perhaps refers to the fillets or chaplets frequently depicted in Mughal-era paintings of yogis and in the reliefs at Dabhoi. A dalit caste in Rajasthan who share many characteristics with the Nāths and practise tantric sexual rites wear a thread called a *selī* around their heads (Khan 1994:449). The *selī* worn around the neck by today's Naths is also known as a *janeo*, the Hindi for the Sanskrit *yajñopavīta* or "sacred thread." The sacred thread is *not* worn by Brahmanical ascetics, who discard it at the time of initiation. Sannyasi ascetics of the Dashnami Naga orders of today, however, do wear short threads around their necks, on which is strung a *rudraksha* seed. Ramanandi Tyagis wear a similar thread, which they call a *selī* and on which is strung a piece of *tulasī* wood.

In the *premkathas*' descriptions of yogis, *kanthā* most probably refers to a distinctive cloak, often but by no means always patchwork,⁴² which is very common in Mughal-era paintings of Naths, and also in carvings on temple columns at Vijayanagar, but is not found in earlier Indian or Tibetan depictions of Naths or siddhas. Pandey claims, without providing evidence, that the cloak "is of Indian Nāthapanthī, rather than non-Indian, Sūfī origin,"⁴³ but the absence of sources earlier than the *Cāndāyan* for its wearing by Indian ascetics and the importance

⁴² There are Mughal-era and later depictions of ascetics of other orders wearing cloaks, but they are very few. Today's Naths do not wear heavy cloaks of the kind seen in Mughal-era paintings, but they and other ascetics, in particular those that practise *haṭhayoga*, do sometimes wear a long cotton cloak with holes for the arms, known as an *alphī*. In the *Śrī nāth rahasya* (p.490), the *kanthā* is identified as an ochre cloak (*colā*). *Padmāvat* 237.7 mentions fragments (*tūka tūka*) of a *kanthā*, implying that it is patchwork.

⁴³ S.M. Pandey, "Kutuban's *Miragāvatī*: its content and interpretation," in *Devotional Literature in South Asia: Current Research 1985-1988*, ed. R.S. McGregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 184-5.

which it had in the Sufi tradition from at least 1000 CE onwards⁴⁴ suggest that Nath yogis may have adopted the wearing of cloaks from Sufi practice. The *kanthā* is mentioned in various first-millennium sources, but most likely with reference to a patchwork cloth rather than a cloak.⁴⁵ Taking into account the apparent shift in meaning of *kanthā*, I have translated it in the *Cāndāyan* as “patchwork cloth” and in the later *premkathas* as “cloak”.

Figure 2.9



2.9 Nath Yogi with dhandhārī, Pushkar 1998, photograph by Ann Grodzins Gold

⁴⁴ Carl Ernst, personal communication 27 July 2009. On the subject of Sufis in India in the thirteenth century, Digby writes “The cloak [*khirqā, rida*], like the prayer carpet, is a major symbol of the transmitted authority of the Shaykh.” S.Digby, 1970, “Encounters with Jogīs in Indian Ṣūfī hagiography.” Unpublished paper presented at a seminar on Aspects of Religion in South Asia at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

⁴⁵ E.g. *Śatakatraya* 1.21, *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 11.23.034, *Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṃgraha* 18.395. *Yatidharmasamuccaya* ch.3 quotes various *Dharmaśāstras* which mention the *kanthā* among ascetic apparel. The 5th-century Buddhist *Viśuddhimagga* (pp.62-64) gives instructions on how to make a patchwork cloth (*cīvara*) from rags, which is to be worn like the usual householder’s robe. The *kanthā* plays an important role in the story of the siddha Kanthadi in the 1304 CE *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* (p.18).

Figure 2.9 detail



Figure 2.10



2.10 British Library J.22, 16

Figure 2.10 detail



The third exclusively Nath item is the *dhandhārī* or puzzle, which is mentioned in the *Miragāvatī*, *Madhumālatī* and *Padmāvat*, but not in the earlier *Cāndāyan*. Dvivedi (1911:239) says that the *dhandhārī* is what has come to be known as the *Gorakh dhandhā* and consists of a disc made of iron or wood around which is wrapped a thread in which a cowrie shell is entwined. The shell is impossible to extract without knowing the trick of doing so. The cowrie thus represents the soul ensnared in the wheel of samsara, which can only be extracted with the requisite yogic knowledge.⁴⁶

I have not seen one of these in my fieldwork⁴⁷ so did not know what they look like nor whether they are still used until 2013 when I wrote to Professor Daniel

⁴⁶ In modern Hindi *gorakh dhandhā* is used as a figure of speech for an impossibly complicated situation, to the displeasure of some Gorakhnathis who see it as an affront to Gorakhnāth, not least because of *dhandhā*'s specific modern Hindi meaning of "occupation": they do not like the implication that the world-renouncing Gorakh had a job.

⁴⁷ It may be that the mainstream Nath lineages have stopped using, or never did use, the *gorakh dhandhā*. The *Śrī Nāth Rahasya* (p. 493) makes no mention of its being a puzzle, saying it means the business (*dhandhā*) of worshipping Gorakh in the manner taught by him.

Gold, who had mentioned them in an article on householder Naths in Rajasthan (Gold 1999:85 n.25).⁴⁸ Professor Gold sent me a photograph taken by Ann Grodzins Gold in 1998 at an ashram near Pushkar, which shows a Gorakhnathi yogi holding a *Gorakh dhandhā* (Ill. 2.9). A very similar object is depicted in a 17th-century painting of Naths in the collection of the British Library (Ill. 2.10). These *Gorakh dhandhās* are slightly different from that described by Dvivedi: “The Gorakh ḍaṇḍā [sic] consists of a rod strung through a series of intricately connected rings; one tries to get the rings on and off the rod” (1999: p.85 n.25).

Of the insignia listed in the three *premkathas*, the ones analysed thus far are those that the Gorakhnathis shared with other ascetic traditions and those that are specifically theirs. The Gorakhnathis’ association with the remaining items — the *cakra* (bladed hoop), *kingrī* (viol), *triśūla* (trident) and *rudrākṣa* seed — is more complex.

The *cakra* probably refers to the bladed hoop or discus which was widely used as a weapon in pre-modern India and is one of the characteristic attributes of the god Vishnu. It seems likely, however, that since at least the time of the composition of the *Miragāvatī* and *Padmāvat*, the Gorakhnathis of north and west India did not engage in fighting of any sort and that the *cakra*’s inclusion in those texts is a relic of its use in the *Cāndāyan*.⁴⁹ It is perhaps because of this that Agrawala, in his edition of the *Padmāvat*, identifies the *cakra* with the *pāvitri* or ring worn on the finger as part of ritual practice.⁵⁰ Elsewhere in the *Padmāvat* (10.3 *dohā* and 247.7), however, we find the *cakra* mentioned as a weapon, and in the *Miragāvatī*, Raj Kunwar uses his *cakra* to chop off the seven heads of a demon (128.5).

⁴⁸ Daniel Gold, “Nath Yogis as Established Alternatives: Householders and Ascetics Today,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, vol. 34(1), 1999: 68-88; the *gorakh dhandhā* is mentioned on pp.74-75 and in note 25

⁴⁹ See Mallinson (2013), fn.43, to which may be added a statement made to me by a Gorakhnathi ascetic called Sumit Nath at Kadri *math* in Karnataka on 6 March 2016 to the effect that Naths cannot fight because of their earrings: it would be too easy for an opponent to pull a Nath's earring and rip his ear, thereby obliging him to leave the order.

⁵⁰ Winand Callewaert, *Dictionary of Bhakti*, New Delhi: D.K.Printworld, 2009, s.v. *cakra*.

Conversely, in the *Madhumālatī* the *cakra* is said to be worn on the head (*mām̐tha*),⁵¹ and could perhaps refer to the circular fillets or chaplets worn by Naths in many material depictions from the Dabhoi reliefs onwards.

At the time of the composition of the *Padmāvat* there were warrior yogis in the retinue of the King of the Yogis from Kadri on the Malabar coast of southwest India. These yogis used *cakras* as weapons and, in marked contrast to the pacifist yogis of the north, were literally bloodthirsty. Ludovico di Varthema recorded an attack, carried out in 1506 at the request of the Muslims of Calicut, on two Christian spies by two hundred of the King's yogis, who "cast at them certain pieces of iron which are made round like a wheel, and they threw them with a sling, and struck Ioan-Maria on the head and Pietro Antonio on the head, so that they fell to the ground; and then they ran upon them and cut open the veins of their throats, and with their hands they drank their blood."⁵²

The *kiṅgrī* is a stringed musical instrument, so called, according to Dvivedi (1911: 241), because it makes the noise *kin kin*. Briggs (1973 [1936], p. 24) says that Naths of the Bhartrihari *panth* play the *sāraṅgī* and sing ballads about legendary yogis. Shah (1957, p. 190) says that because Gopichand, the hero of one of the Nath ballads, was the first to use it, the *sāraṅgī* is known as the *gopīyantra*. Like the *cakra*, the *kiṅgrī* is found in Mughal-era depictions Sannyasis, but not in those of Nath yogis. Some of the Nath siddhas in the two groups at Panhale Kaji, however, do carry stringed instruments.⁵³

⁵¹ A variant reading *hātha*, "hand", is found in one manuscript.

⁵² *The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema*, tr. G.P. Badger, London: the Hakluyt Society, 1863, p. 274, available online at <http://publicdomainreview.org/collections/the-travels-of-ludovico-di-varthema-1863/>, last accessed on 4 June 2016.

⁵³ Shah (1957, p. 186) says that the siddha at Dabhoi whom he identifies as Kaniphnath is carrying a stringed instrument, but I was unable to discern it when I visited the site.

Two insignia remain, the *triśūla* or trident, and *rudrākṣa* seed, both archetypal emblems of the god Shiva.⁵⁴ The Naths' roots lie in Shaiva tantric traditions of the first millennium, and early depictions of siddhas of the Nath tradition at Dabhoi show them wearing necklaces of *rudrākṣa* seeds,⁵⁵ but Gorakhnathīs depicted in Mughal painting do not sport Shaiva emblems.⁵⁶ This is perhaps symbolic of the *nirguṇī* doctrines found in Nath vernacular texts and espoused by the other ascetic groups with which Gorakhnathī yogis of the period fraternised (who were often denoted by the umbrella term *sant*). In recent years Gorakhnathīs have once again become more overtly Shaiva, adding a *rudrākṣa* seed to the *śiṅgīs* worn around their necks and sometimes using *rudrākṣa* rosaries.

There is one exception to the otherwise total absence of Shaiva accoutrements in Mughal depictions of Gorakhnathīs. It is found in a painting attributable to the Mughal court artist Payag and dated c. 1630-35⁵⁷ which depicts a naked Gorakhnathi (identifiable by his *śiṅgī*) in a cremation ground, wearing a necklace of skulls and propitiating a terrifying four-armed yogini or goddess (identified as Bhairavi in a caption above the painting which may be a later addition), while sitting next to a *triśūla*. The *triśūla* is associated with Shaiva ascetics who undertake extreme and antinomian tantric practices, usually in cremation grounds. Such practices were associated with first-millennium Atimarga Shaiva ascetics, often loosely termed Kapalikas ("skull-bearers"). The small number of Nath

⁵⁴ The *triśūla* is shown as an emblem of Shiva on coins from the second century BCE (J.N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1956. P. 114-5), and the wearing of *rudrākṣa* seeds is mentioned widely in Shaiva works from the c. 6th-century *Niśvasatattvasaṃhitā* (*Uttarasūtra* 4.25) onwards..

⁵⁵ The two registers above that of the twelve siddhas on the Mahudi Gate at Dabhoi depict eight female Shaiva deities and eight male Shaiva deities together with smaller consorts, confirming the siddhas' Shaiva affiliation.

⁵⁶ A very small number of the hundreds of Nāths depicted at Vijayanaga, Srisailam and Shringeri in early 16th-century reliefs carry *triśūlas*.

⁵⁷ The picture is reproduced in Debra Diamond, *Yoga: the Art of Transformation*, Washington: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2013, p. 197 fig. 16. On Payag see Stuart C. Welch, "The two worlds of Payag — further evidence on a Mughal artist", in *Indian Art and Connoisseurship*, ed. John Guy 1995, New Delhi: IGNCA and Mapin Publishing, 1995, pp. 321-341.

yogis of these traditions usually trace their lineages to Jalandharipa (later known as Jalandharanatha) or Kanhapa/Kaneripa, and to this day remain distinct from the Gorakhnathi mainstream. A Sanskrit text called the *Siddhāntavākya* attributed to Jalandharanatha and cited by H. Dvivedi (1996, p. 6 fn.4) lists *mudrā* (earrings), *nāda* (i.e. the *śiṅgī*), *triśūla*, *kharpāra* (i.e. the *khappara* or bowl) and *bhasma* (ashes) as insignia of both the best yogi and Śiva. The *Śrī Nāth Rahasya* includes the *triśūla* among the ritual paraphernalia of the Gorakhnathī yogi (2010, p. 207), adding that it is used in worship of goddesses such as *Mahākālī*, *Mahādurgā* and *Bhavānī Māi* (who are associated with cremation ground rites), and that Aghori yogis use it in their rituals.

Conclusion

The lists of yogi insignia in the *premkathas* are so similar that they almost certainly derive from a common source, which, in the absence of any earlier list, is likely to be the *Cāndāyan* itself.⁵⁸ We have no contemporary material depictions of Naths from the region in which the *Cāndāyan* was composed with which to compare Daud's description, but Mughal-era paintings of Naths from the same region show significant differences from the descriptions in the later *premkathas*. Nath yogis in Mughal miniatures do not play the *kiṅgrī*, wear wooden sandals or carry parasols and bladed hoops (the only exceptions are in illustrated manuscripts of the *premkathas* themselves). Furthermore, they are very often depicted with a wide range of accoutrements that are *not* mentioned in these texts, such as fillets, hats, coloured silk necklaces, ash shovels and dogs (e.g. Ill. 2.6, 2.7).⁵⁹ Thus it seems that

⁵⁸ Not only are the contents of the lists very close, but there are parallels in their wording. Thus both the *Cāndāyan* and *Madhumālātī* have the phrase *savana phaṭika mundrā*, “crystal earrings in the ears”, and the *Cāndāyan* and *Miragāvatī* share the phrases *gorakha panthā*, *pāiṃ pāiṃvarī*, *daṇḍā khappara* and *śiṅgī pūrai*.

⁵⁹ The lists of yogi accoutrements in the *Navanāthanavakam* and *Abhai mātr jog* (see footnote 3?), both compositions of the Nath order itself, include *topikā*, hat, and various terms unknown to me (e.g. *guṭikā* and *ḍibi*), which may refer to some of these items.

the authors of the three later *premkathas* took their descriptions of the garb of the yogi from the *Cāndāyan* and not from direct observation.⁶⁰

The *Cāndāyan*'s description, on the other hand, could perhaps have been based on direct observation, and some of the insignia may have either fallen out of use or been misunderstood by the later authors. Thus a c. 14th-century depiction of a Nath at Panhale Kaji does show him with a *kiṅgrī*, and the *Cāndāyan* says that the yogi's *selī*, or thread, is to be worn on the head, perhaps in the manner of the fillets ubiquitous in Mughal depictions of yogis (and to which the *Madhumālatī*'s *cakra* may refer). Similarly, Daud may have known of warrior yogis who used *cakras*, bladed hoops, but they are not attested in the Awadh region during the time when the later *premkathas* were composed.

The inclusion of *jaṭā*, matted locks, in the lists in the 16th-century *premkathas* and its omission in that of the *Cāndāyan* may also be significant. None of the Naths at Dabhoi has *jaṭā*, and only a small proportion of those depicted at Panhale Kaji and in Mughal-era paintings wear them. Meanwhile, *jaṭā* are almost universally worn by ascetics of the Sannyasi traditions depicted in Mughal miniatures. It may be that the authors of the later *premkathas*, like many other observers and scholars, conflated the yogis of the Sannyasi and Nath traditions. Furthermore, the inclusion of *jaṭā* in their lists underlines their lack of close engagement with living yogis: *jaṭā* take some years to form and may not be donned at will.

Taken together with material and other evidence, the descriptions of yogis in the *premkathas* show how the Nath order was never a homogenous whole, and that its parts themselves changed over time. Nevertheless, they also point to how the parts did constitute a distinct, if heterogenous order. The insignia listed in the *Cāndāyan* could not all be carried by a single yogi; rather, they are an inventory of the accoutrements of members of various different Nath lineages. Certain items among them appear to have been essential markers of Nath corporate identity from the thirteenth century and perhaps earlier, in particular the large hooped earrings and *śiṅgī*, or horn. A statue of Matsyendra dated to the tenth century shows him wearing these insignia. The c.1230 CE Dabhoi siddhas all have earrings in their

⁶⁰ One item suggests that the authors of the later *premkathas* might have consciously updated Daud's list of yogi insignia: the *dhandhārī*, or puzzle, for which there is no textual or material evidence prior to the texts themselves.

earlobes, and may be wearing *śiṅgīs* (damage makes it impossible to be sure). An inscription dated 1279 CE from Kalleshvara in Karnataka praises various figures whose names end in -natha and then includes earrings (*yogamudrā*) among the insignia of the guru Shivayogi.⁶¹

From at least the sixteenth century, the Naths have been loosely organised into twelve *panths*.⁶² The Nath order remained, and to a great extent remains, a disparate and loose confederation of yogis, but since perhaps the 18th century certain north Indian lineages who claim Gorakh as the founder and most important guru of the order have sought to unite it under his tutelage and create a more homogenous whole. (It is the forerunners of this branch of the order who are most often represented as yogis in Mughal-era paintings and who would have been the dominant yogi grouping in the Awadh region when the later *premkathas* were composed.) Membership of this new dispensation was, and continues to be, marked by the wearing of hooped earrings through the cartilages of the ears rather than the lobes. I know of no evidence of this practice prior to the late 18th-century (Mallinson 2013). Monika Horstmann (2014) suggests that the description of a yogini cutting her ears in the *Padmāvat* means that she is cutting the cartilages, because if she were cutting the lobes there would be no point in mentioning it, as “this much simpler act is commonly performed during childhood and need not be expressly mentioned

⁶¹ B. L. Rice, *Epigraphia Carnatica Vol. XI. Inscriptions in the Chitaldroog District*, Bangalore: Mysore Government Central Press, 1903, p. 155. The other insignia mentioned are the *yogapaṭṭa*, *yogadaṇḍa* and *yogapādukā*.

⁶² See Bouillier (2007, pp. 26-36) on the current, somewhat more complex schema. I have previously (2011, pp. 415-416) pointed to the early 17th century as the date of the first references to the tradition of twelve *panths*. A list of twelve yogi *panths* in a manuscript of the *Nujūm al-‘ulūm* puts this date back to 1570, the year in which the manuscript was completed; see Emma Flatt, “The Authorship and Significance of the *Nujūm al-‘Ulūm*: a sixteenth-century astrological encyclopaedia from Bijapur,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 131.2 (2011): 415-6. Taranatha’s biography of his guru Buddhaguptanatha, which was written in 1602, also gives a list of the names of the twelve *panths* older than those I have previously noted; see G. Tucci, “The Sea and Land Travels of a Buddhist Sādhu,” *Indian Historical Quarterly* 7(4), 1931:687; see also D. Templeman, “Buddhaguptanatha: A Late Indian Siddha in Tibet,” in H. Krasser, M.T. Much, E. Steinkellner and H. Tauscher (eds), *Tibetan Studies*, Vol. II, Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, pp. 955-966. The groupings of sculptures of twelve Naths found at both Dabhoi and Panhale Kaji suggest that the twelve-*panth* schema may be much older.

in a distinctly yogic context”. But in Mughal-era (and earlier) depictions of Nath yogis, the yogis wear in their earlobes hooped earrings so large that they would require cutting of the earlobes beyond the usual piercing. Furthermore, in not one of those depictions are the yogis’ earrings worn through the cartilages of their ears.

The attempt at uniting the various disparate Nath groups under the tutelage of Gorakh has been carried out by north Indian Naths, who in 1906 formed the “Great Council of the All-India Yogis of the Twelve Orders who Wear Ascetic Garb” (Akhil Bharatavarshiya Avadhut Bhesh Barah Panth Yogi Mahasabha; “Mahasabha” for short). They have several hundred centres, which are concentrated primarily in north and west India.⁶³ Despite the claim implicit in the name of the organisation that they preside over all India, there are very few centres in east and northeast India and Karnataka, just one in Andhra Pradesh,⁶⁴ and none in Kerala or Tamil Nadu. Notwithstanding the lack of Nath centres affiliated to the Mahasabha, significant yogi traditions are found in these regions. Thus there are castes of householder yogis in Kerala,⁶⁵ (Freeman 2006), various extant Tamil siddha lineages, t̃antrikas living in cremation grounds in the Birbhum district of West Bengal and Vajrayana Buddhist Naths in Darjeeling. None of these traditions sees Gorakh as the most important of the Nath gurus (the Vajrayana tradition of West Bengal in fact sees him as an apostate, on which see Mallinson 2013: n.28). At Dabhoi and Panhale Kaji Gorakh is clearly not the most important Nath.⁶⁶ At Dabhoi he is the fourth of

⁶³ <http://www.yogigorakshnath.org/index.php/piligrimage.html>, accessed 28 April 2016.

⁶⁴ The one Nath centre in Andhra is in Hyderabad, not the ancient siddha centre of Srisailam. Several reliefs on the *prakara* wall of the Mallikarjuna temple at Srisailam, which was completed in 1510 CE, narrate Nath legends (see Linrothe 2006), but the site has long been under the control of Virashaivas.

⁶⁵ Rich Freeman, “Shifting Forms of the Wandering Yogi”, *Masked Ritual and Performance in South India: Dance, Healing, and Possession*, ed. David Shulman and Deborah Thiagarajan Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2006, pp. 147-87.

⁶⁶ The relief of Gorakh on the Mahudi Gate at Dabhoi is the earliest known representation of him and his mention in the *Cāndāyan* is the earliest known textual reference to him from north India. For earlier textual references from elsewhere in India see J. Mallinson, “*Haṭhayoga’s* Philosophy: A Fortuitous Union of Non-Dualities,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 42 (1), 2014:233 n.28.

the ascetics depicted, after Ādinātha, Matsyendra and Cauraṅgi, while at Panhale Kaji it appears that he is the sixth (although my identification of him there is uncertain).

A detailed history of the development of the Nath order awaits more detailed histories of its various constituent lineages. At first these were the heirs to various first-millennium Shaiva and Buddhist tantric traditions, including skull-bearing Shaktas living in cremation grounds, Vajrayana Buddhist yogis, Garudika snake-charmers, ascetic successors to Pashupata and Kalamukha lineages,⁶⁷ *mantramarga* Kaulas, warrior yogis and alchemists. The loose-knit nature of the order meant that it later shared lineages, teachings and practices with other traditions, in particular Sufis and Sants, and it is this latter synthesis that we find reflected in the *premkathas* and Mughal-era painting.

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⁶⁷ A 1063 CE inscription from Omkareshwar names a Pashupata called Gandhadhvaja, suggesting a link with the *dhaja panth*, one of the 12 *panths* in early lists; see N.P. Chakravarti, “A Note on the Halayudha Stotra in the Amaresvara Temple,” *Epigraphia Indica* XXV (1948): 183-185. The *Pampāmāhātmya* prescribes the carrying of a *dhvaja* or flag as part of the Mahāvratā vow undertaken by Kālamukha ascetics (*Uttarabhāga* 13.75-76; I thank Anthony Evensen for providing me with this reference). The temple complex at Eklingji, which houses a 971 CE shrine to Lakulisha, became a Nath centre before being taken over by the Dasnami Sannyasis; Tryna Lyons, “The Changing Faces of Eklingji: A Dynastic Shrine and Its Artists”, *Artibus Asiae*, 58 (3/4): 254, fn.8.

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